Lessons Learned in External Peer Review

Panel Session

9 May 2006

Steve Cone,
OWPR
Panel Chair

Panel Participants

- Steve Cone, HQ-OWPR, Panel Chair
- Jack Kiefer, CDM
- Jim Fredericks, NWD
- Dan Smith, Tioga Group
- Terry Stratton, SAD

Corps Process for Peer Review of Decision Documents

EC 1105-2-408

31 May 2005

Steve Cone,
OWPR

Purpose

- To ensure the quality and credibility of the Corps decision documents
  - Adjusts and supplements current process
- Closely follows Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review by the Office of Management and Budget 2004
  - "OMB Bulletin"

New Policy Strengthens

- Technical Quality
- Independence of Review
- Responsiveness
- Documentation
- Shared Lessons Learned

Contents

- Applicability
- References
- Background
- Policy
- Review Plan
- Planning Centers of Expertise
- Independent Technical Review (ITR)
- External Peer Review – (EPR)
- Administrative Requirements
- Plan for Further Peer Review Guidance

Applicability

- All studies & reports needing authorization
  - cost sharing agreement not yet signed
- Does not apply to documents approved by MSC commander (CAP, post-auth, etc)
  - May apply if vertical teams finds it appropriate
- Pre & Post Authorization studies for which vertical team determines EPR is appropriate
- Only to scientific / technical information – not policy or project recommendations
  - Factual inputs (data, assumptions, analyses, risks)
  - Use of models (models themselves subject to separate peer review and certification process)

Main References

- OMB “Peer Review” Bulletin 2004
- NRC Section 216 report on Peer Review
- EIG Report on Quality Management in Planning (2004)
- EPA Peer Review Handbook
- Corps regulations
  - ER 5-1-11 includes requirement for ITR
  - EC 1105-2-407 on Planning Models
- EAB recommendations on peer review

Background

- Independent Technical Review (ITR)
  - Ongoing; not by those doing the work
  - Conforms with professional principles and practices
- External Peer Review (EPR)
  - Extends fundamental principles of ITR
  - High risk, complexity, precedent-setting
- Washington level legal and policy compliance review

Level of Review

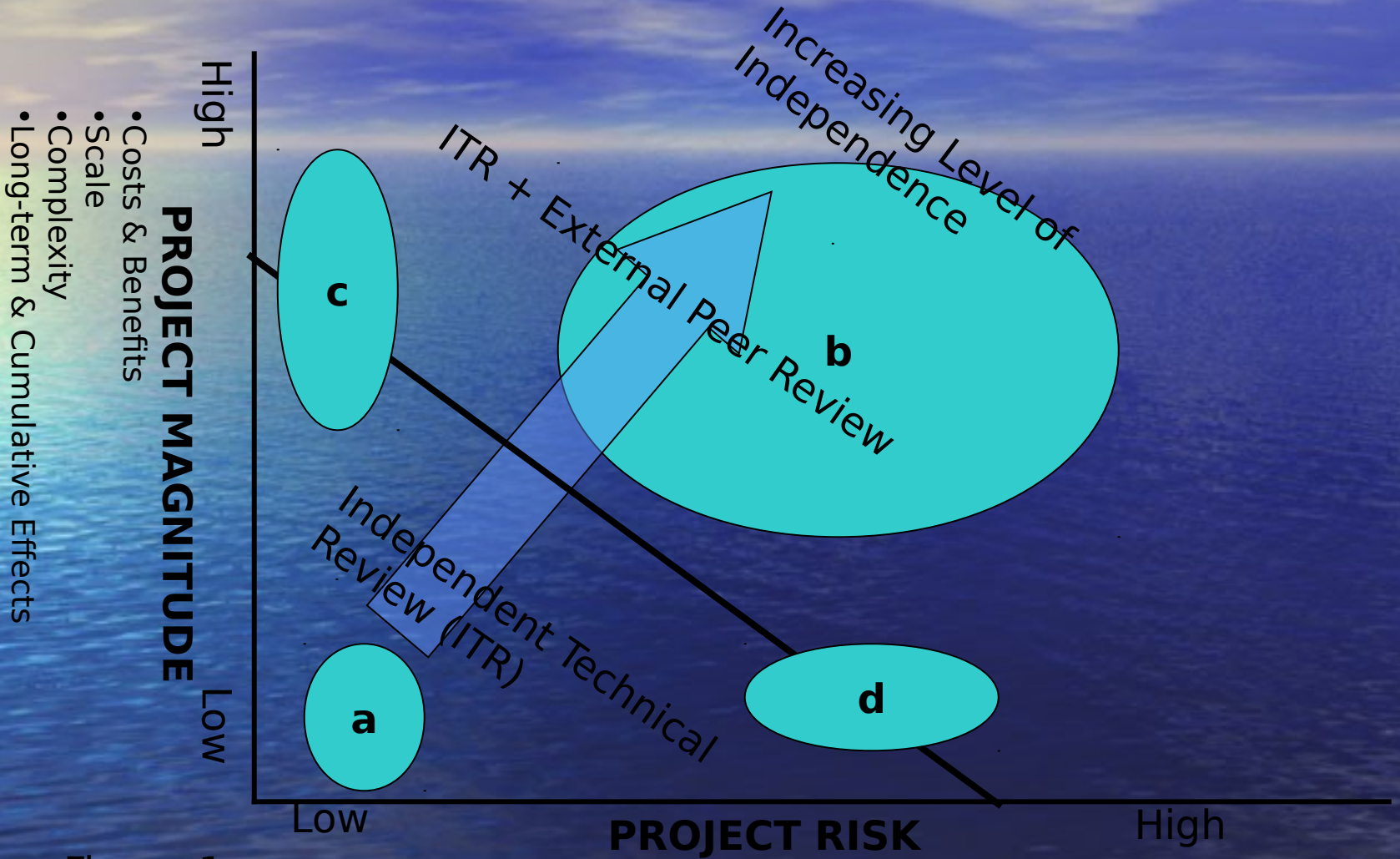

Figure 1

Policy on Peer Review

- Scientific and engineering information underlying decisions and recommendations in water resources studies and reports will be reviewed to ensure its quality.
- Review and response completed before District Engineer signs report and presents to CWRB
- ITR and EPR are cost shared
- ITR to use DrChecks

Peer Review Plan

- Peer review plan is part of PMP
- Will be published on Web
- ITR or ITR/EPR
- How it will be conducted
- How reviewers will be selected
- How public can comment

Independent Technical Review (ITR)

- All documents covered by the EC
- Not controversial, not precedent setting, nor significant national effects
- Draft document available for public review
- Reviewers are SME from Corps or outside
- Reviewer prepare report and district responds.
- Review report and responses are posted on Web.

External Peer Review (EPR)

- Controversial, precedent setting, or has significant national effects
- Includes all the requirements & procedures from ITR
- Must use SME from outside the Corps
- High risk studies – Center to contract for management and conduct of EPR
- Governor or Agency head may request Chief to consider EPR
- Chief’s report addresses EPR

Planning Centers of Expertise

- Will manage ITR and EPR
- Center assigned based on primary purpose of study
- May conduct or manage ITR
- Post peer review agenda on Web
  - HQ-OWPR maintains National site
- Provide info for annual report to OMB
  - HQ-OWPR prepares and submits Corps report

Administrative Requirements

- FACA generally not expected to be applicable, but may be in some cases
- Chief of Engineers may waive or defer peer review for compelling reason and discuss in Chief's report

Plan for Further Guidance

- Developing “roll out” plan to train Corps and stakeholders
- Final guidance in two years based on experience gained through use
- Develop handbook like EPA’s for peer review
- Develop review guides for PCX’s (some efforts currently underway)

Panel Participants

- Steve Cone, HQ-OWPR
- Jack Kiefer, CDM
- Jim Fredericks, NWD
- Dan Smith, Tioga Group
- Terry Stratton, SAD

Lessons Learned in External Peer Review

Steve Cone,
OWPR

Alternative Models for Peer Review

- **S. 728**
  - **Similar to EC 1105-2-408**
  - **Federal Cost**
  - **Passed by Committee**
- **HR. 2864**
  - **Requires NAS or similar organization**
  - **All projects > $50M**
  - **Federal Cost**
  - **Otherwise similar to EC 408**
  - **Passed full House**
- **Feingold/McCain**
  - **Broader scope than EC 408**
  - **Run by IG of Army**
  - **All Projects > $25M**
  - **End of Study**
  - **Introduced in Senate**

MAJOR ISSUES ENCOUNTERED

- Delaware River
  - Use of rates charged rather than vessel costs for navigation benefits
  - Inconsistent data and assumptions
  - Modeling Errors
  - Container volumes and routing

- Port of Iberia
  - Confirmation of ITR and Policy Reviews
  - Advice on NED benefits for Foreign competition

OWPR Observations on EPR

- Document, Document, Document
- EPR costs money and time
- Adds Quality
- Adds Credibility
- Don’t wait to the end
- Expect the unexpected

OWPR Observations on EPR

- There are people interested and can do EPR
- Will take some education of EPR
- Corps will learn from EPR
- EPR Cares
- EPR more independent than Corps Review
- Will become public documents

- *Cannot treat EPR the same as you do Corps Reviewers*

Questions for Panel ?

- Jack Kiefer, CDM
- Jim Fredericks, NWD
- Dan Smith, Tioga Group
- Terry Stratton, SAD
- Steve Cone, HQ-OWPR